DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 427 568 HE 031 759

AUTHOR	Berson, Judith S.; Younkin, William F.
TITLE	Doing Well by Doing Good: A Study of the Effects of a Service-Learning Experience on Student Success. ASHE Annual Meeting Paper.
PUB DATE	1998-11-00
NOTE	21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (23rd, Miami, FL, November 5-8, 1998).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Achievement; *College Faculty; College Instruction; *College Students; Community Colleges; Grades (Scholastic); Higher Education; *Service Learning; *Student Attitudes; Student Participation; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	*ASHE Annual Meeting; Faculty Attitudes

ABSTRACT

This study explored the effects of service learning on student success in college. The study consisted of 286 students enrolled in six paired community college courses in various disciplines. One section of each pair was taught using traditional subject matter and course materials, while the other section of each pair was required to participate in a 20-hour service learning activity in addition to the regular course curriculum. Participating faculty completed questionnaires and interviews regarding the courses, and students completed end-of-course evaluations. The results indicated that, overall, students who participated in the sections with a service learning requirement achieved higher final course grades and reported greater satisfaction with the course. In addition, faculty members who taught the service learning sections reported that class discussions were more stimulating, the sections seemed more vital in terms of student involvement, and the students seemed more challenged academically than in the traditional instruction sections. (Contains 27 references.) (MDM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 427 568

DOING WELL BY DOING GOOD:

A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF A SERVICE-LEARNING EXPERIENCE ON STUDENT SUCCESS

Judith S. Berson, Ed.D.
Broward Community College

William F. Younkin, Ph.D.
University of Miami

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Paper presented at the
1998 Annual Meeting of the
American Society of Higher Education
Miami Beach, Florida
November 1998

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

HE031759

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

V. Vaughan
ASHE

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ASHE *Association for the Study of Higher Education*

Headquartered at the University of Missouri-Columbia • College of Education • Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis • 211 Hill Hall, Columbia, MO 65211 • 573-882-9645 • fax 573-884-5714

This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held in Miami, Florida, November 5-8, 1998. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

DOING WELL BY DOING GOOD:
A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF A SERVICE-LEARNING EXPERIENCE ON STUDENT SUCCESS

Judith S. Berson, Ed.D.

Broward Community College

William F. Younkin, Ph.D.

University of Miami

This study explored the effects of a service-learning experience on student success. Students enrolled in six paired community college courses in various disciplines participated in a quasi-experimental study that explored the effects of a service-learning experience on success as measured by class attendance, course completion, final course grade, and end-of-term evaluation data. The results indicated that, overall, students who participated in the sections with a 20-hour service-learning requirement achieved higher final course grades and reported greater satisfaction with the course.

In the Talmud, the Rabbis teach us that "Good deeds are better than wise sayings." Today we would say "actions speak louder than words" or, to be more hip, "walking your talk" beats just talking. While there is no doubt that the primary role of higher education is academic, the goal of educators is also to develop graduates who are fully functioning members of society. It is often out-of-class activities that produce our most valuable citizens and community leaders. As the information age dramatically changes our definition of the nature of work, educators face a dual challenge of preparing students to be productive in today's highly competitive marketplace while imparting the values necessary to sustain us as a society (Harkavy, 1995; Rifkin, 1996).

Introduction

Colleges and universities across the nation are embracing volunteerism and student community service programs as antidotes to a society suffering from disengagement, disinterest, and disenchantment. However, in this era of accountability and educational reform, "doing good" for good's sake is not enough. To obtain needed funding, educational institutions are mandated to document specific student outcomes, thus students must also "do well." Beyond stepped up attempts at self-assessment and program evaluation, college administrators and faculty are continually searching for new ways to help students learn *and* graduate. Empirical evidence is needed to measure the effect of service experiences on student success.

Today, for millions of Americans, community colleges are often the only means to access higher education. Though applauded by many as the premier providers of affordable educational services, these open door "people's colleges" are frequently

criticized for becoming revolving doors. Research indicates that high school graduates who intend to pursue higher education are less likely to succeed if they begin their studies at a two-year institution (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Innovative programs, processes, and teaching methods are continually explored and tested by community college leaders striving to create true learning organizations (Bumphus, 1996). One exciting motivational strategy is the introduction of community service into the curriculum through service-learning (Enos & Troppe, 1996), an educational practice that links education and social responsibility through active learning. Since its entry into college and university campuses in the 1960s, service-learning has provided a linkage between community service and classroom instruction, using reflection to develop critical thinking skills and a sense of civic responsibility (Kendall, 1990).

Alexander Astin (1991), a well known researcher who has monitored the values of incoming first year college students since the 1970s, found students of the 1980s to be "markedly more materialistic and more concerned with having power and status" (p. 57). Colleges and universities cannot afford the luxury of insulating themselves from such social issues as homelessness, illiteracy, teen pregnancy, dropouts, substance abuse, juvenile offenders, and the elderly (Harkavy, 1995). A vital means by which colleges support such learning is by imbedding such experiences directly into the curriculum (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). Professors throughout the country have been introducing service components into their courses. There is general agreement among advocates of public service as a fundamental mission of higher education, that academic programs and service must be combined (Hirsch, 1996; Bradfield & Myers, 1996). According to

Kupiec (1992), the strategy of refocusing academic programs to help to "solve concrete, immediate real world problems...[will] advance higher education and human welfare" (p.3).

Service-learning is multifaceted. One aspect is as a course-related pedagogical method utilizing experiential education to teach citizenship, academic subjects, skills, and values. Lessons are drawn from a service experience that meets community needs combined with critical reflection on the service to gain further understanding of the course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. Students work in a wide range of projects, e.g., assisting in community agencies, participating in environmental projects, tutoring, mentoring, or providing services to at-risk populations.

Service-learning is basically a form of experience-based learning. The primary difference between experiential education and service-learning is the focus. The former benefits the student, while the focus of the latter is two-fold in that service-learning is reciprocally beneficial to the student as well as the community, with the emphasis on the community (Cohen & Kinsey, 1994; Kendall, 1990; Kraft & Krug, 1994). Service-learning can be an option in a traditional course, a course requirement, or the focal point of a service course. Any course can be designated as a service-learning course as long as the instructor agrees to inject a reflection component that relates the course content with the service issue. With national attention being paid to the lofty goals that service-learning endeavors to achieve, it cannot be viewed as "merely a faddish add-on to an already overburdened curricular reform agenda" (Battistoni, 1995, p. 34).

Service-learning appeals to people for a variety of reasons. In a speech at a conference on learning communities, noted educator K. Patricia Cross (1997) stated that "some are attracted to Dewey's experiential notions of learning while doing; some like the disciplinary integration that is required in addressing real problems; some regard reflection on experience as critically important to deeper learning; some like the community involvement that is required—not only participation in the college service-learning community, but participation in a wider non-university community as well; some are attracted by the experience with diversity that students get when they participate in a community that is usually very different from any university community; some like the moral dimension of social responsibility; some like the affective aspects of compassion and empathy that are presumably developed through service-learning."

Nevertheless, student community service in general and service-learning in particular are often viewed as extracurricular or co-curricular activities. In light of the fiscal belt tightening that prevails in this country today, funding for service-learning initiatives is often eclipsed by academic program needs. If service-learning is to become accepted by faculty and academic administrators as an integral part of the curriculum, data are essential to make the case that service-learning has an effect on academic success.

Most studies do not address today's student, especially today's community college student. The community college student of today is typically older, commutes, attends classes part-time, has family responsibilities, works at least 20 hours a week, and is racially or ethnically diverse (Kuh and Vesper, 1991; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991).

For these students, academic goals often compete for time spent with their families, work, and community activities.

Theoretical Basis

This study of the relationship between a service-learning experience and academic success was guided by Tinto's Student Integration Model (Tinto, 1987). Tinto theorized that student intentions and commitments when they enter higher education are subsequently modified through a series of "interactions between the individual and the structures and members of the academic and social systems of the institution" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 51). He contends that student retention, and ultimately student success, is a direct result of "satisfying and rewarding encounters with the formal and informal academic and social systems of the institution" [and is] "presumed to lead to greater integration" Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 51). Tinto's model has been used successfully to study many student outcomes in addition to college attrition, e.g. academic skill acquisition, personal change, major changes, and his theory of departure (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). However, since much of Tinto's work has focused on students at four-year institutions, it is important to determine whether the same concepts and approaches that are applied to traditional students attending traditional institutions can adequately describe the student experiences at community colleges. Tinto's model provides an explicit theoretical structure which "offers significant opportunities both to researchers who wish to study the college-to-student change process and to administrators who seek to design academic and social programs and experiences

intended to promote students' educational growth" (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991, p. 53).

Pascarella and Terenzini suggest that, since "some of our most cherished notions about the determinants of impact may have little relevance to these [community college] students" (p.632), investigations into college effects on students should be refocused on the vast numbers of students who, although usually classified as "nontraditional," are "rapidly becoming the majority participants in the American postsecondary system" (p.632). Knight (1994) agrees that more studies are needed on community college students where their "backgrounds and goals and the type and scope of student involvement opportunities may be unlike those for senior institutions" (p. 3-4).

Prior Research

Although there has been growing interest in studying the effect of service-learning activities on student development (Luce, 1988), there are still important issues that need to be addressed. The limited number of replicable studies and empirical evidence on the impact of service experiences (Miller, 1994) is even more critical for community colleges where, according to a 1995 survey, 75% of community colleges are either actively involved in or interested in offering service-learning on their campuses.

There are a variety of issues to examine when assessing service-learning outcomes. Typically, proponents suggest that two central questions be addressed: "1) What is the effect of service-learning on the intellectual, moral, and citizenship development of participants? and 2) What is the effect of service-learning on the advancement of social institutions and democracy?" (Giles, Honnet & Migliore, 1991).

Whereas previous studies examined the effect of a service-learning experience on student perception of their personal growth (Miller, 1994), social attitudes (Markus et al., 1993), moral reasoning (Boss, 1994), and cognitive, moral and ego development (Batchelder & Root, 1994), this study examined student academic success. It attempted to answer several critical questions, namely: "What effect does participation in service-learning have on students in terms of final course grade, class attendance or course completion?" "Is there a significant improvement in student knowledge or skills as a result of their participation?" "Did students expend more effort and display greater satisfaction with the course and the instructor because of the service-learning requirement?" "What were the issues and opportunities for faculty who added the service-learning requirement to their course?"

Markus et al. (1993) conducted one of the few studies that attempted to isolate the effects of service-learning on academic achievement. The researchers used a randomized control group design to compare sections of political science classes with and without a service-learning component. By randomly assigning the community service activities, they controlled for student achievement levels. However, as in many similar studies, the students in the control group were required to write longer term papers based on library research than students who participated in the service activities (Markus et al., 1993). Nevertheless, the results indicated higher scores on mid-term and final examinations, a significant increase in favorable course evaluations, and the students who performed community service demonstrated more positive attitudes toward service and the community.

Methodology

The study consisted of 286 students enrolled in six paired courses taught by five instructors (one instructor taught two paired courses). One section of each pair (the control group) was taught using traditional subject matter and course materials and the other section of each pair (the treatment group) was required to participate in a 20-hour service-learning activity in addition to the regular course curriculum. The courses in the study included American History, Sociology, College Preparatory English, and Introduction to English Composition.

A quasi-experimental nonequivalent control group design was used to examine the effects of the service-learning experience on the students. The students self-selected the section they enrolled in, without any knowledge of the experiment. The results of this enrollment process appears to be essentially random (see Table 1 in Appendix). When service-learning is offered as a course option and student participation is voluntary, it is difficult to know whether gains are a result of the student's initiative and motivation, or are truly an effect of the treatment. Two traditional measures of student success and persistence are grades and attendance. Thus, this study involved collecting data on class attendance patterns, final grades, withdrawals, and course completion rates.

The students did not know about the service requirement in advance and both groups of students were assessed by the instructors using the same exams and assignments. Instructors provided data on student attendance. Withdrawals, final course grade, and course completion data were obtained from official college records. A post-term survey was administered to the students to assess their attitudes about the course

material, satisfaction with the course and perceived level of effort they exerted in the course. In addition to the student data, participating faculty were assessed using a focus group, a beginning-of-term survey, an end-of-term survey, and personal interviews to examine faculty attitudes about the course sections and their experience.

Most of the studies that have been done on the effects of service-learning on academic outcomes were conducted in selective four-year universities where the majority of students were recent high school graduates, attended full-time, and resided on campus. Therefore, there is limited research on the effects of service-learning on non-traditional students attending community colleges, or on students enrolled in college preparatory courses.

Results

The study involved data collection using college records, faculty records, and survey-type instruments. One instrument provided for the assessment by faculty of their expectations about the outcomes of the experiment, another assessed faculty reflections at the end of the term, and the third instrument assessed students' attitudes toward the course, the instructor, their perceived level of effort, and the grading system.

The results of the study indicated that, overall, students who participated in a class in which service-learning was a requirement achieved higher final course grades and reported greater satisfaction with the course, the instructor, the reading assignments, and the grading system (see Table 2 in Appendix). In addition, the faculty members reported that, in the treatment sections, class discussions were more stimulating, the sections

seemed more vital in terms of student involvement, the students seemed more challenged academically, more motivated to learn, and seemed to exert more effort in the course.

This confirms Pascarella and Chapman's conclusions (1983) based on applying Tinto's model to non-residential college students, that "commitment to the institution... is defined largely by successful and personally-satisfying interactions with the academic rather than the social systems of the institution" (p.95).

In addition to the fact that the mean final course grades were .26 higher for the students in the treatment group, there was also a significant difference in the level of student satisfaction as reported in the end-of-term student questionnaire. In 15 out of 17 end-of-term evaluation criteria, students in the treatment group gave higher ratings to statements concerning satisfaction with the course, the instructor, and their grades in the course. The difference was significant in all three of the criteria related to grades ($p < .05$). Students in the treatment group were more likely to report that their grade was "a fair assessment" of their performance, that the grading system was "clearly defined," and that the exams "covered important aspects of the course."

Data were also collected from the seven participating faculty members to determine motivations and reactions to their participation in the study. Two questionnaires were administered and one-on-one interviews were conducted with each of the participating faculty members. Although the faculty reported that they would offer service-learning as an option in future courses, they did not agree that they would elect to make it a requirement.

Conclusion

Employers are demanding more from our graduates than skill in the disciplines. More and more they are seeking workers who can communicate effectively and have developed skills in problem-solving, critical thinking, and reflection. To prepare our students to meet the coming challenges, student affairs and academic affairs professionals must find ways to collaborate. Service-learning is one of the best strategies for bridging the gap between these two vital areas in order to enhance student success.

It is generally accepted that service participation has a positive effect on students' ethical and social values, leadership ability, social skills, self-esteem, concern for others, racial understanding, commitment to continued service, and critical decision-making ability (Kendrick, 1996). However, service-learning is viewed as a philosophy of education as well as a program type. As an educational philosophy, data are needed to substantiate the academic benefits to students in addition to ethical, social, and personal development benefits. In this regard, research on experiential education and learning styles is of some use. This study lends credence to the theory that service-learning experiences lead to higher levels of involvement and performance. At commuter institutions grades tend to be in direct relation to a student's commitment whereas attendance and course completion is subject to external influences not always under the student's control. Further research is necessary to be able to substantiate the causal links.

Bibliography

Astin, A.W. (1991). *Assessment for excellence: The philosophy and practice of assessment and evaluation in higher education*. New York: American Council on Education MacMillan Publishing Company.

Batchelder, T.H. & Root, S. (1994). Effects of and undergraduate program to integrate academic learning and service: Cognitive, prosocial cognitive, and identity outcomes. *Journal of Adolescence*. 17, 341-355.

Battistoni, R. (1995, Winter). Service learning, diversity, and the liberal arts curriculum. *Liberal-Education*. 30-35.

Boss, J.A. (1994). The effect of community service work on the moral development of college ethics students. *Journal of Moral Education*, 23(2), 183-198.

Bradfield, C.D. & Myers, R.A. (1996, March-April). Practice in enriching the student learning experience through community service learning." *About Campus*.

Bringle, R.G. & Hatcher, J.A. (1996, March/April). Implementing Service Learning in Higher Education. *Journal of Higher Education*. 67 (2), 221-239.

Bumphus, W.G. (1996), Aug/Sept). Dare to dream the dream. *Community College Journal*. 67 (1), 3.

Cohen, J. & Kinsey, D. (1994, Winter). 'Doing good' and scholarship: A Service-Learning Study. *Journalism Educator*. 4-14.

Conrad, D. & Hedin, D. (1991). School-based community service: What we know from research and theory. *Phi Delta Kappan*. 72, 743-749.

Cross, K.P. (1997, January). Keynote Address Presented at the Transforming Campuses into Learning Communities Conference, University of Miami, FL.

Enos, S.L. & Troppe, M.L. (1996). Service-learning in the curriculum. In Jacoby, B. *Service-Learning in Higher Education*. 156-181.

Giles, D.; Honnet, E.P.; & Migliore, S. (1991). *Research agenda for combining service and learning in the 1990s*. Raleigh, NC: National Society for Experiential Education.

Harkavy, I. (1995, June). Summary of Workshop Presented at the Campus Compact Center for Community Colleges 4th National Conference, Scottsdale, AR.

Hirsch, D. (1996, May). An agenda for involving faculty in service. *AAHE Bulletin* 48(9), 7-9.

Kendall, J.C. & Associates. (1990) . *Combining service and learning a resource book for community and public service*. Raleigh, NC: National Society for Internships and Experiential Education.

Kendrick, J.R. (1996) Outcomes of service-learning in an introduction to sociology course. *Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning*. 72-81.

Knight, W.E. (1994, June). Influence on the academic, career, and personal gains and satisfaction of community college students." *AIR 1994 Annual Forum*.

Kraft, R.J. & Krug, J. (1994). Review of research and evaluation on service learning in public and higher education. In Kraft, R.J. & Swadener, M. (Eds.), *Building community: service learning in the academic discipline*. Denver, CO: Colorado Campus Compact.

Kuh, G.D. & Vesper, N. (1991, November). Influence on student learning at metropolitan institutions. *ASHE Annual Meeting*.

Kupiec, T. (1992,Spring). The project on integrating service with academic study. *Compact News*. 6(1).

Luce, J. (Ed.). (1988). Service-learning: An annotated bibliography linking public service with the curriculum. Raleigh, NC: National Society for Experiential Education. In *Combining service and learning: A resource book for community and public service, Vols. III*. Raleigh, NC: National Society for Internships and Experiential Education.

Markus, G.B., Howard, J.P.F., & King, D.C. (1993, Winter). Integrating community service and classroom instruction enhances learning: Results from an experiment. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis.*, 15(4). 410-419.

Miller, J. (1994, Fall). Linking traditional and service-learning courses: Outcome evaluations utilizing two pedagogically distinct models. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*. 1(1). 29-36.

Pascarella, E., & Chapman, D. (1983). A multi-institutional, path analytic validation of Tinto's model of college withdrawal. *American Educational Research Journal*, 20, 87-102.

Pascarella, E.T. & Terenzini, P.T. (1991). *How college affects students*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Rifkin, J. (1996, April/May). Preparing the next generation of students for the civil society. *Community College Journal*. 20-23.

Tinto, V. (1987). Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. In Pascarella and Terenzini (1991). *How College Affects Students*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Table 1

Comparison of Students in the Treatment Sections With Students in the Control Sections for Gender, Ethnicity, Reading Ability, and English Ability

Variables	Treatment		Control			
	n	%	n	%	χ^2	p -Value
Reading Ability						
College Level	49	46.0	53	44.0		
College Preparatory	58	54.0	67	56.0		
Total	107	100.0	120	100.0	.061	.806
English Ability						
College Level	50	40.0	48	37.0		
College Preparatory	75	60.0	83	63.0		
Total	125	100.0	131	100.0	.305	.581
Ethnicity						
White	80	60.0	75	52.0		
Black	18	13.0	26	18.0		
Hispanic	31	23.0	38	26.0		
Other	5	4.0	5	4.0		
Total	134	100.0	144	100.0	1.969	.579
Gender						
Female	79	59.0	84	58.0		
Male	55	41.0	60	42.0		
Total	134	100.0	144	100.0	.003	.958

$p < .05$

Appendix

Table 2

Comparison of Aggregated Groups of Students in the Treatment and Control Sections for Withdrawals During the Drop/Add Period, Absences, Course Completion Rate, Final Course Grades, and Student End-of-Term Evaluation Data (Hypothesis 6)

Chi-Square Analyses Results

Variable	Treatment n	Treatment %	Control n	Control %	χ^2	p-Value
Drops during Drop/Add Period	174	7.5	180	7.2	.008	.928
Course Completion	174	88.5	180	90.6	.397	.529

Independent Samples t-Test Results

Variable	Treatment M	Treatment SD	Control M	Control SD	t	p-Value
Absences	4.08	6.06	3.88	7.91	1.01	.316
Final Course Grade	2.70	1.09	2.44	1.08	2.25	.025*
Student End-of-Term Survey Data						
I. Instructor Satisfaction	4.49	.82	3.96	.08	6.87	.001**
II. Satisfaction with Grading System	4.37	.875	3.90	1.04	3.99	.001**
III. Overall Satisfaction with Course	4.30	1.00	3.83	.93	2.22	.029*
IV. Self-Reported Motivation	4.18	.90	3.90	1.10	1.94	.054
V. Self-Reported Learning	4.35	.82	.397	1.09	1.99	.049*
VI Self-Reported Effort	3.77	1.18	3.80	1.04	.176	.860

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

Authors

JUDITH S. BERSON, Ed.D. is Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Director of Student Financial Services at Broward Community College, Fort Lauderdale, FL, and is well known for her FIPSE-funded innovative service learning programs involving college students mentoring at-risk youngsters. She is also a lecturer in Higher Education at Florida International University and President of Educational Empowerment Institute, Miami Beach, FL, a firm specializing in employee training programs. She is the author of two books and several articles including *A marriage made in heaven: community colleges and service-learning* and *Win win win with a service-learning program.* This paper is excerpted from her doctoral dissertation research.

WILLIAM F. YOUNKIN, Ph.D. is a lecturer in Management Science in the School of Business at the University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL and is president of Educational Instruction Systems, Inc., a consulting firm specializing in program evaluation. He is an associate of the Center for the Study of Quality in Service and Manufacturing and is active in conducting workshops and training seminars on the use of statistics in quality improvement. Prior to becoming a teacher and consultant, Dr. Younkin was a university administrator, holding positions including University Registrar and Director of Institutional Research.